

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0212

FOL TEL FM CHIANG MAI DATED 6 JAN SENT ACTION BANGKOK

INFO UDORN, AMCON SONGKHLA REPEATED FOR UR INFO

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CHIANG MAI 006

BANGKOK PASS AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJECT: ELECTION '75 - V

1. SUMMARY - THANOM'S VISIT IS WORKING AGAINST MANY FORMER
UTPP CANDIDATES AS OPPOSITION JUMPS IN TO DISCREDIT THEIR
DUBIOUS PAST. PARTY LEADERS ARE APPEARING IN NORTH ALTHOUGH
PARTY LABELS REMAIN GENERALLY UNIMPORTANT. SOME PROVINCES ARE
ATTEMPTING INCLUDE THEIR STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN GOVERNMENT'S
ELECTION PREPARATIONS. ONE OBSERVER FEELS METHOD OF VOTING
WILL LEAD TO ADVANTAGE FOR LOW-NUMBERED CANDIDATES AND
DISQUALIFICATION OF SIZEABLE NUMBER OF BALLOTS. DESPITE
PREVIOUSLY REPORTED ELIGIBILITY OF SOME HILLTRIBES, THEIR
PARTICIPATION IN CHIANG MAI IS LIKELY TO BE SMALL. END SUMMARY.

2. IMPACT OF THANOM'S VISIT BEING FELT BY FORMER UTPP
CANDIDATES WHO ARE BEING ATTACKED BY OPPONENTS,
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PARTICULARLY DEMOCRATS, SAYING FACT THAT THANOM WAS FORCED

TO LEAVE PROVES HE TOTALLY WITHOUT POWER IN THAILAND AND ANYONE FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH HIM FULLY DESERVES TO BE DISCREDITED. CHAT THAI CANDIDATE IN TAK, PRASIT CHUMPANIT, TOLD CONSULATE POLITICAL ASSISTANT HE IS READY TO THROW IN TOWEL. DESPITE FACT THANOM IS NATIVE OF TAK AND HAD THROUGH THE YEARS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO THAT PROVINCE, PRASIT (WHOSE BROTHER IS A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF THANOM'S) SAID HE HAS BEEN BRANDED PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE BY HIS OPPONENTS, AND EVEN MEMBERS OF PUBLIC TREAT HIM WITH HOSTILITY AND HECKLE HIM WHEN HE ATTEMPTS TO HOLD RALLIES. HE CLAIMS THANOM'S RETURN RUINED ANY CHANCE HE MAY HAVE HAD FOR BEING ELECTED.

3. VISITS TO NORTH BY PARTY LEADERS FROM BANGKOK ARE BEGINNING TO PICK UP. LARGE RALLY WAS HELD BY DEMOCRAT LEADERS DEC 5 IN UTTARADIT, AND HEAD OF SOCIAL NATIONALISTS, PRASIT KANCHANAWAT, IS COMING TO CHIANG MAI, LAMPHUN AND TAK THIS WEEK. PARTY AFFILIATION STILL LACKS MEANING TO ELECTORATE IN MANY AREAS. DURING LUNCH IN PHITSANULOK, FOR EXAMPLE, AT NAKORN AMARINTR HOTEL AN OFFICIAL OF JOINT SECURITY CENTER (JSC) FOR REGION 6 TOLD CONOFF THAT SUCHON CHAMPOONOOT, OWNER OF THE HOTEL AND PREVIOUS WINNER IN 1969, WOULD LIKELY WIN AGAIN. CONOFF THEN ASKED WHAT PARTY SUCHON BELONGED TO AND GOT A PUZZLED "I DON'T REMEMBER" RESPONSE. THE JSC-6 OFFICIAL THEN ASKED THREE WAITERS, THE RESTAURANT MANAGER AND A GROUP OF LOCAL BUSINESSMEN HAVING LUNCH AT THE NEXT TABLE THE SAME QUESTION. THEY ALL WERE VERY FAMILIAR WITH SUCHON, BUT NO ONE KNEW HIS PARTY AFFILIATION.

4. UTTARADIT GOVERNOR TOLD CONOFF HE HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN PROVINCE AND IN ATTEMPT TO DIFFUSE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH THEM HAS RECRUITED THE MOST RESTIVE TO WORK ON "GET OUT THE VOTE" CAMPAIGN AND ASSIST ON ELECTION EVE IN SITUATION ROOM AT SALA KLANG. HE FEELS THAT HIS EFFORTS TO INCLUDE THEM ARE WORKING AND WILL ALLOW HIM TO REFUTE ANY CHARGES THAT ELECTIONS WERE CONDUCTED UNFAIRLY.

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5. RECENTLY-ELECTED LORD MAYOR OF CHIANG MAI, RUANG NIMMANAHAEMINDA, HAS OBSERVED THAT JUST AS IN 1969 ELECTION WHEN CANDIDATES WHOSE NAMES WERE LOCATED IN CORNERS OF BALLOT BENEFITTED FROM 'CUT AND PAST' VOTING SYSTEM, THIS YEAR CANDADATES AT TOP OF BALLOT WILL HAVE ADVANTAGE. RUANG WENT ON TO SAY THAT IN PAST YEARS WHEN MARK BESIDE NAME WAS REQUIRED FOR VOTING, BALL POINT PENS DISQUALIFIED MANY WHO WOULD SCRATCH ON

BACK OF BALLOT TO GET PEN WORKING THEREBY
DEFACING
BALLOT AND UNWITTINGLY DISQUALIFYING THEIR VOTE. HE
ASSUMED THERE WOULD BE SAME PROBLEM THIS TIME AROUND.

6. NEWSPAPERS IN CHIANG MAI CARRY SURPRISINGLY LITTLE
ELECTION NEWS. "THIN THAI", HOWEVER, RECENTLY
DID DISSERVICE TO ONE OF CHIANG MAI'S LEADING CANDIDATES,
VORASAK NIMMANAND (DEMOCRAT), WHEN IT RAN ARTICLE WITH
VORASAK'S PICTURE HEADLINED BY STATEMENT HE HAD RENEGED
ON PROMISE TO GIVE HIS TENANT FARMERS INCREASED RICE
RETURN. ARTICLE STATED HE HAD PROMISED TO ABIDE BY NEW
LAND LEGISLATION, ALTHOUGH IT HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE LAW,
BUT LATER REFUSED. WHEN FARMERS COMPLAINED, HE
REPORTEDLY CHANGED HIS MIND AND GAVE THEM PROMISED AMOUNT.
COMPLIANCE WITH PROMISE WAS NOTED ONLY AT END OF ARTICLE,
AND OVERALL IMPRESSION WAS THAT VORASAK DOESN'T KEEP
PROMISES -- VORASAK IS DECIDEDLY UNHAPPY ABOUT THE
PUBLICITY.

7. NOTWITHSTANDING GOVERNOR ASA'S STATEMENT THAT 20,000
CHIANG MAI PROVINCE HILLTRIBES WOULD BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE,
IT APPEARS THAT ONLY SMALL NUMBER WILL ACTUALLY CAST
BALLOTS. CONOFF DURING RECENT TWO-DAY VISIT TO LISU
VILLAGE IN CHIANG DAO DISTRICT ASKED 20-25 ELIGIBLE
VOTERS IF THEY PLANNED TO VOTE. EACH ANSWERED THEY
WERE NOT GOING TO VOTE BECAUSE THAI DIDN'T WANT THEM
TO. HILLTRIBES IN THIS VILLAGE HAD BEEN TOLD THEY
SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED IN THAI POLITICS BECAUSE SUCH
THINGS DIDN'T CONCERN THEM. VILLAGERS MADE IT CLEAR
THEY DID NOT TRUST THAI ELECTORAL PROCESS AND WERE NOT
ANXIOUS TO PARTICIPATE EVEN IF GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL
OFFICIALDOM MADE AN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE THEIR PARTICIPATION.
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HARBIN UNQUOTE.
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